

Cycling Safaris

La RIOJA 2010 7 night guided tour



A superb trip, following the River Ebro, the longest in Spain, as it flows from its source in the Cantabrian Mountains down to the distant Mediterranean. The very name of the Iberian Peninsula comes from this river – Iberia, the country of the Ebro.

Our route follows a tiny mountain stream flowing through green pastures of Cantabrian Mountains along the shores of the Ebro Reservoir past the Monastery of Montesclaros surrounded by forests. We will be cycling through beautiful valleys and you will have an opportunity to visit the characteristic churches carved into rocks in the valley of Valderredible. We will stop and visit the fairytale village of Orbaneja del Castillo with its cascades running through the village.

As we will be cycling through the canyons, vineyards and small villages with the river close to us all the time we will see how the countryside and the river itself change from stage to stage.

Limestone mountains of Sierra de Cantabria are the background of La Rioja region - the home of the finest wines produced in Spain. We will spend a night in the village of Haro where you will have a chance to sample the wine produced here.

This is a magnificent trip for those who wish to visit parts of Spain the tourists never see.

TOUR ITINERARY

Day 1 **Transfer to Campoo**

Arrival in Santander/Bilbao and transfer to our hotel in Campoo. Test bikes.

Day 2 **Campoo – Villanueva de la Nía** **Min 53km**

This stage takes us through some fabulous and unspoilt scenery. From the green mountain pastures of the Cantabrian Mountains, along the shores of the Ebro Reservoir, past the Monastery of Montesclaros surrounded by forests to finally rejoin the Ebro in the Valley of Valderredible and tonight's stop in Villanueva de la Nía. Those on the short version follow the river direct to Villanueva. The longer version circumnavigates the Ebro Reservoir.

Day 3 **Villanueva de la Nía – Pesquera de Ebro** **53km**

We begin by cycling through the open valley of Valderredible. Take the opportunity to visit the Romanesque church of San Martín de Elines and also the churches carved into the very rock which are so characteristic of this region. As we progress down the river, the sides of the valley begin to close in until we find ourselves in a marvellous canyon of ever-increasing dimensions, where eagles and vultures soar overhead. Stop to visit the fairytale village of Orbaneja del Castillo with its cascades running through the village. As we approach Pesquera, the canyon of the Ebro reaches unbelievable dimensions before we finally reach the attractive village that will be tonight's resting-place.

Day 4 **Pesquera de Ebro – Medina de Pomar** **Min 36km**

A beautiful route which follows a huge bend of the river through the most picturesque and undiscovered villages. An optional extension takes us to the dramatic village of Puentedey, built on a natural rock bridge over the River Nela. Tonight we stay in the Castillian town of Medina de Pomar with its old Jewish quarter and the castle dominating the town and the surrounding landscape.

Day 5 **Medina de Pomar – Frías** **56km**

From Medina, we head back to the Ebro, The route then takes us along a quiet country road running parallel to the river where the valley begins to open out again. Visit the Romanesque church of San Pedro de Tejada and soon we are cycling through yet another canyon, which then opens out into the fertile valley around Frías. This is a spectacular village built around its castle and enjoying fine views of the Ebro Valley.

Day 6 **Frías – Haro** **62km**

As we leave Frías / Herrán, the valley begins to close in on us again until we find ourselves in another spectacular canyon. The road runs along the shores of a reservoir surrounded by high mountains and through short tunnels carved out of the rock. The route crosses the little town of Miranda del Ebro before passing through imposing peaks that signal the gateway to the enormous open valley of La Rioja. Tonight is spent in the wine-producing village of Haro, with a chance to drink a glass or two of Rioja in its birthplace. Our shorter route terminates in Miranda and we transfer to Haro.

Day 7 **Haro – Laguardia** **Min 25km**

We begin Day Seven with a visit to one of the many famous bodegas in Haro, complete with wine tasting. We then cycle through endless vineyards and numerous picturesque villages of La Rioja, with the backdrop of the Sierra de Cantabria mountains and the Ebro never too far away. We finally reach the superb walled medieval village of Laguardia where, as in Haro, wine is almost a way of life.

Day 8 End of services

With transfers to Santander/Bilbao

TOUR DATES

May 23

September 18

TOUR PRICE

€1120 per person sharing

€1250 per single occupancy

INCLUDED IN THE TOUR PRICE

- 7 nights accommodation with continental style breakfasts
- Luggage transfers
- Guide and support van
- 5 meals included
- Wine tasting
- **Hybrid** 21 speed bike rental
- Pickup in both Bilbao and Santander. The final transfer would again be to Bilbao or Santander.
- Route description and maps

BIKE AND FITNESS

You are provided with hybrid-type tourist bicycles of a quality brand with conventional handlebars and with 21 easy-to-change gear ratios for comfortable and easy cycling. Generally easy cycling as the route follows the River Ebro as it flows downstream. Some days may involve some climbing when the route moves away from the river. Partial transfers of riders with our support vehicle allow us to offer both short and long stages.



LADIE'S FRAME



GENT'S FRAME

Tour grade: Easy to moderate.

ACCOMMODATION

The accommodation on this tour can range from small posadas, casas rurales, casas de labranza* or "country inn" type accommodation to three and four star hotels. They are, wherever possible, small establishments, each with its own charm and character and are chosen for their unique location, regional atmosphere, comfort, cleanliness, and personalized customer service. All rooms have en-suite bathrooms. Please note that many of these types of accommodation do not use the hotel star rating system as they are classed as "country inns" by local Tourist Boards. However, their standards of quality and service are certainly on the same level as other star-rated hotels.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

By Air

Travellers on the routes of Cantabria and also the Rioja route generally arrive at Santander or Bilbao Airport (transfer from Santander included in price).

There are scheduled flights with Ryanair from Dublin to Santander each Sunday and returning flight, also on Sundays which will work perfectly with this tour. Also, flights from Dublin to Bilbao are available with Aer Lingus Departing on the Sunday and returning on Tuesday, giving you a little more time to explore.

Some companies fly directly to Santander or Bilbao from the UK and other European airports. It is also possible to take connecting flights through Spanish airports such as Madrid or Barcelona or through other European cities. This is particularly true for US customers.

Santander Airport is connected with Madrid and Barcelona, although flights are not so frequent. It is also connected directly to the UK with RyanAir flying from London, Stansted.

Bilbao Airport also has a selection of international flights and on request we can transport passengers to and from the airport which is just a 75 minute drive from the start of the cycling route. One of the most popular options is EasyJet with direct flights to Bilbao from London Stansted. EasyJet also links to Aberdeen, Belfast, Edinburgh, East Midlands, Glasgow, Inverness, Liverpool & Newcastle.

Trains & Buses

If you are travelling within Spain, there is an excellent network of road transport. The Spanish Intercity train service is called Renfe. The local train service along the coast of the Basque Country, Cantabria & Asturias is called FEVE. The major coach companies, depending on where you are travelling, are Alsa and Continental Auto.